

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 /092 R

DRAFTED BY EA/PHL;RTWILLNER;EM

APPROVED BY EA/PHL;BAFLECK

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R 141952Z APR 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG:RP

SUBJECT: OIL EXPLORATION IN REED BANK AREA

REF: MANILA 5063

1. IN APRIL 13 CONVERSATION WITH VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS STEPHENS OF BRINKERHOFF DRILLING COMPANY, DENVER, DEPTOFF NOTED REPORT THAT BRINKERHOFF WAS PLANNING TO DRILL IN REED BANK AREA; THAT THIS AREA WAS CLAIMED BY ROC, PRC, VIETNAMESE AND PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENTS. EXPLAINED USG TOOK NO POSITION ON VALIDITY OF RESPECTIVE CIMS BUT COULD NOT GUARANTEE PROTECTION IN DISPUTED AREA FOR US VESSELS OR PERSONNEL, AND WOULD QUESTION WISDOM OF US FIRMS OPERATING IN THAT AREA. NOTED USG COULD NOT PROHIBIT SUCH ACTIVITY BUT WANTED TO BE SURE THAT COMPANY UNDERSTOOD THE RISK.

2. STEPHENS SAID BRINKERHOFF HAD SIGNED CONTRACT ABOUT TEN
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DAYS AGO AND THEY WERE NOT SURE THEY COULD GET OUT OF IT.

HE SAID THEY DO NO PRODUCTION DRILLING, ONLY EXPLORATION. THEY HAD BEEN DRILLING IN PALAWAN AREA AND THOUGHT REED BANK SITE WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY FARTHER FROM PHILIPPINE LAND THAN SITES PREVIOUSLY EXPLORED.

3. DEPTOFF SAID IT HAD BEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING REED BANK WAS ABOUT 150 MILES FROM PALAWAN AND WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PALAWAN TRENCH, WELL INTO DISPUTED AREA. SAID DEPARTMENT COULD CHECK AGAIN IF BRINKERHOFF COULD PROVIDE COORDINATES. STEPHENS SAID THESE WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE TO HIM.

4. STEPHENS SAID MOST OF WORKERS ON RIG WOULD BE FILIPINOS. DEPTOFF NOTED THEY WOULD BE RESPONSIBILITY OF PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT BUT THAT AMERICANS WOULD BE OF CONCERN TO USG.

5. STEPHENS ASKED IF USG HAD ANY INFORMATION ON POSSIBILITY OF SWEDISH UNDERSTANDING WITH OTHER CLAIMANTS TO THE AREA. DEPTOFF SAID WE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS.

6. STEPHENS ASKED IF USG WOULD NOT PROTECT AMERICAN VESSELS. DEPTOFF NOTED THAT AREA IN QUESTION DID NOT APPEAR TO BE HIGH SEAS. ASKED WHAT US WOULD DO IN CONFLICT BETWEEN PHILIPPINES AND VIETNAM, DEPTOFF NOTED WE HAVE DEFENSE TREATY WITH PHILIPPINES BUT DOUBTED IT WOULD APPLY TO AREA IN QUESTION.

7. STEPHENS SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH MR. BRINKERHOFF AND BE IN TOUCH AGAIN.
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